

The 15th International Fungi and Fibre Symposium

by MARTA PREVOSTI, MÒNICA DÒRIA AND ESTHER DE PRADES
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The fifteenth International Fungi and Fibre Symposium was held at the Jaca Summer School from 7 to 14 October 2012. The event dates back to 1980, when Carla Sundström and Miriam C. Rice organized the first meeting in Canada, and ever since then it has been held every other year in different places all over the world. It is organized by the [International Mushroom Dye Institute \(IMDI\)](#), founded in 1985, and its aim is to celebrate the wide range of colours that can be obtained with mushrooms and to promote the research into these pigments and their use. On this occasion the event was run by the Spanish Mushroom Dye Association and we would like to thank Marie-Noëlle Vacher, Anna Homs and Nilia Bañares for taking charge of its organization.

Carla Sundström and Miriam C. Rice were the pioneers in the research into the wide range of possibilities that mushrooms offer for use as a raw material

Anna Homs's workshop: batik cotton printed, Java style.





¹ Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Guatemala, Iceland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, and the US.

Olga Reiche's workshop: wool, linen, cotton and hemp dyed with mushroom dyestuff. ▲

in fabric dyeing and printing. Carla and Miriam set out to explore an area which is new and old at the same time, and which allows us to enjoy a range of colours that are closely linked to the earth and do not need chemical treatment. This area is relatively unexplored today; its traditions are lost in the past, and practically all its ancestral techniques have been forgotten. But the scientific names of the mushrooms often point to their ancient use in dyeing – for example, *Pisolithus tinctorius*, a fungus used for this purpose by the Romans.

The symposium comprised seven days of constant dialogue between the 75 participants from 17 different countries¹. Products were displayed, experiments explained and discussed, a mushroom exhibition was staged, and numerous workshops were held. Speakers were Marie Noëlle Vacher, José de Uña y Villamediana, Pierre-Arthur Moreau, Sergio Pérez Borjou, Massimo Candusso, Miguel Ángel Ribes Ripoll and Luis Parra.

Some of the days' activities began with an interesting field trip to the magnificent Pyrenean woods around Jaca, where participants collected mushrooms of all kinds, in the middle of a lively exchange of information between experts in dyeing with fungi and mycologists. In particular, the participants praised the wood mushrooms for the excellence of the results obtained for textile dyeing.



Liza Johansson's workshop:
dyestuff made of mushrooms.
Watercolor with mushroom
pigments.

The workshops organized in the afternoons gave practical evidence of the possibilities offered by mushroom pigments. A calico print workshop run by Anna Homs reproduced the technique used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Using the characteristic woodblock moulds the cotton fabric is printed with mordants of alum and sodium carbonate, iron or copper; when dry, it is washed and submerged in the dyestuff created with *Inonotus hispidus*. Also under the expert guidance of Anna Homs, participants printed cotton fabrics using the batik technique, making the reserves with wax and then submerging them once again in the dye made from *Inonotus hispidus*.

Another workshop led by Olga Reiche demonstrated the process of dyeing linen, cotton and hemp previously mordanted with pomegranate rind or banana tree and alum, with a dye made from the mushrooms *Phellodon niger*, *Pisolithus arhizus* and *Inonotus hispidus*. The dyestuff is made with 20% of shredded mushroom and 80% of water, brought to the boil three times in a quarter of an hour and collected each time it boils. Carla Sundström also demonstrated her techniques for natural fibres with dyestuffs made from mushrooms.

The workshop led by Andrey von Waldenfels showed how to make plaster masks decorated with *Polyporus* mushrooms, creating attractive, rustic results. Liza Johansson led another workshop on watercolours made with mushroom pigments. She showed how to make the colours from fungi boiled for an hour in water, thickened, and then collected in a pot and used as paint.

Another day was devoted to tourism, with a fascinating visit to the Textile Workshop in Triste, where participants saw the neolithic looms, inkle looms, a backstrap loom from Guatemala, a horizontal heddle loom from Aragon from the sixteenth century, a shuttle loom, a Nordic countermarch loom, and the famous mule loom of Triste which is considered a forerunner of the Jacquard



Andreya von Waldenfels's
workshop: making plaster masks.

loom, as well as simple hand looms for beginners. The fibres are dyed with natural dyestuffs, and then hand spun and woven. This is a fine demonstration of the recovery of traditional techniques of textile production, one of most important economic activities in the history of humanity.

There were also discussions of classifications of species with explanations by specialists, and sessions on terminology. Specialist books were on sale throughout the symposium. So these seven days proved an enthralling insight into experimentation with the natural dyestuffs extracted from fungi. ●



Andreya von Waldenfels's
workshop: plaster mask decorated
with Polyporus mushrooms.